

2014 Supplement to the Heritage Hill Master Plan

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Master Plan, City of Grand Rapids, November 2002

Zoning Ordinance, City of Grand Rapids, November 2011

Heritage Hill Master Plan, 2005

#### **Acknowledgements:**

The Heritage Hill Association gratefully acknowledges the:

The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired;

Williams & Works;

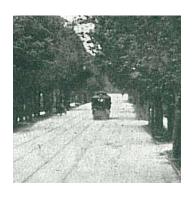
Friendly Corps;

Build a Better Block, Re//State;

Mercy Health;

Grand Rapids Community College; and

All those who attended meetings, workshops, and visioning sessions.



Acknowledgements & References

Over the past 100 years, the State Street corridor has undergone substantial changes and has lost its unifying character. Today, the combination of different architectural styles, vacant buildings, empty lots and lack of understandable direction has only amplified the difficulties that plague building and business owners alike.

The purpose of this plan is to establish a unifying vision for what the State Street Corridor could look like in ten to thirty years, provide the goals and objectives to achieve that desired outcome, and to offer tools and suggestions to help guide the process. Furthermore, the plan is intended to act as a supplement to the existing Heritage Hill Master Plan, last updated in 2005.

In 1988, the Heritage Hill Association adopted its first written plan. The State Street Plan is an addendum to that plan and reflects a consensus of opinions, ideals and directions of Heritage Hill residents. Its purpose is threefold:

- 1. To set an agenda for the Heritage Hill Association and Foundation to continue their work in improving the quality of life in the neighborhood;
- 2. To guide decisions by City boards and departments which will directly affect the neighborhood (in conjunction with the major revision in Grand Rapids' own Master Plan);
- 3. To provide guidance to residents and property owners in the neighborhood who wish to improve their properties and provide for the necessities of present-day living in ways that are sensitive to the predominately residential and historic character of the district.

The original 1988 Master Plan and 2005 update were submitted and adopted by the City Planning Commission to be used as a guide in decision making s that reflects the desires and interests of neighborhood residents. The Plan has been a living document that has guided the Association's activities and has been used in presenting consistent positions to present to City boards and committees, nearby institutions and property owners.

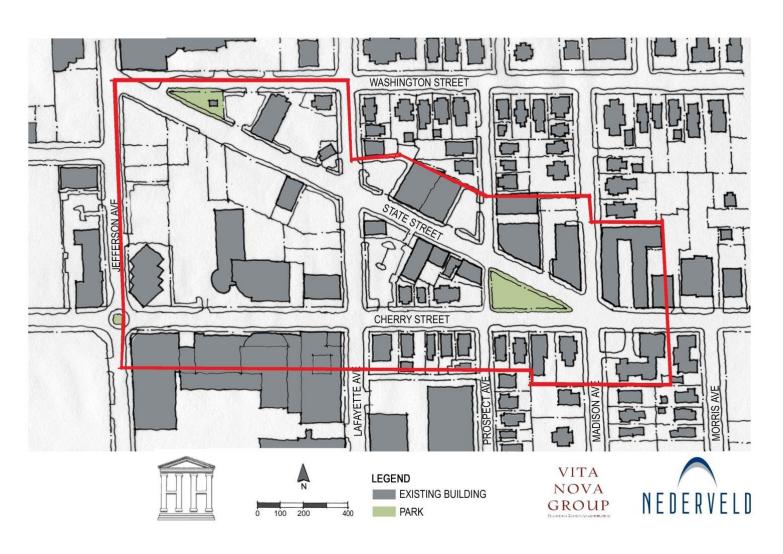


Purpose of the Plan

The State Street Corridor as described in this plan includes all properties on both sides of State Street from Jefferson to Madison Avenues. The corridor also includes properties fronting Cherry Street from Madison to Jefferson Avenues, and those along Lafayette Avenue from State Street to Cherry Street. However, after several stakeholder meetings, it was determined that properties that have frontage on State Street would be the primary focus as it was distictivily different from the rest of the neighborhood and already has partial commerical foundation. This area is of greatest concern amongist committee members as it contains several vacant structures, empty lots, and is currently a crime "hot spot".



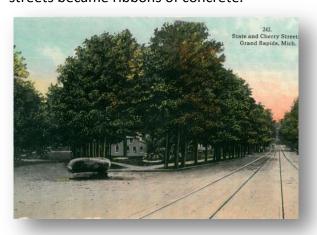
**Project Area** 

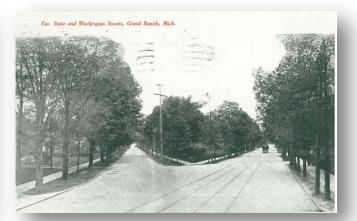


Now occupying a section of a Native American trail that lead southeast away from the Grand River, State Street runs at an angle whereas the surrounding bocks follow a typical city street grid. In Grand Rapid's early days, residential development increased away from the core of the Village center and Canton Smith to platted Smith's Addition in August of 1849. Because the street is at an angle, the geometry established two triangular sections at each end to act as anchors for the street with State Street Park (now Lincoln Park) at the west end and Foster Park at the east end.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, State Street was a traditional tree-lined residential street that also acted as a connector between the downtown core and the outer newly developed neighborhoods. The lots on State Street ranged from fifty feet to seventy five feet wide and most of the residential homes were built between the 1890's and 1920's. For many years, the Rose Street Trolley (now Cherry Street), ran along State Street providing access to many of the uptown homes.

Due to increased traffic and the commercial expansion of downtown, many of the homes along State Street were either removed or modified into commercial structures after the 1920's. Many of the individual parcels were also combined to accommodate larger developments leaving little if any evidence of the streets residential past. These new business included offices, a gas station, restaurants, grocery stores, and an auto dealership. These developments brought about a drastic change to the appearance of the area as new parking lots covered properties once occupied by single-family homes and tree-lined streets became ribbons of concrete.





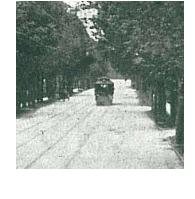


History of State Street

Today, out of the eleven structures that remain along State Street, only one is residential, one houses two restaurants, five are offices that produce little to no foot traffic, one large multiple story structure is completely vacant, two buildings cycle between occupied and vacant with medical or similar office uses, and one contains a limited-selection grocery store. Unfortunately, the activity associated with some of the patrons of grocery store is now, and has been recognized as a nuisance to the neighborhood. The indirect impact resulting from these patrons includes increased crime and vandalism in the area, pan-handling, open alcohol consumption and substantial littering of State Street and nearby streets, and an overall negative and unsafe perception in the nearby neighborhood.

The once majestic red brick surfacing now only covers State Street from Lafayette Avenue to Madison Avenue, the large trees have been replaced with small saplings or litter-filled tree pits. Many of the lots once occupied by single-family homes are now covered by surface parking, or empty lots.

However, a couple of the business owners and occupants on the street, nearby neighbors, along with a very active neighborhood association, have sparked a focus on revitalizing State Street.



# **Current Conditions**



## Grand Rapids Master Plan and Heritage Hill Master Plan

The City of Grand Rapids Master Plan, created in 2002, is a citizendriven document which goes beyond city-wide policies for land use to make quality and character of development a major planning consideration. The Heritage Hill Master Plan, created in 1988 and updated in 2005, provides a neighborhood-wide perspective addressing a combination of preservation, traffic, land use, and policy issues.

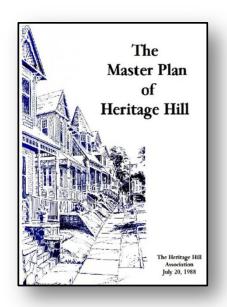
It is also important to recognize that the current zoning ordinance classifies much of the State Street Corridor as Transitional City Center or City Center and that the Future Land Use Plan of the City Master Plan lists the western part of State Street as "downtown" and the eastern part is listed as "medium density residential." It is evident that the corridor does not conform to either of these designations and as a result, the State Street Plan refines the Future Land Use Map of the Master Plan while taking into consideration the current zoning and the neighbors' vision for State Street.

The Heritage Hill Master Plan is less specific as it provides goals, objectives, and policy statements which are applied across the neighborhood in an as-needed basis. The following policy statements apply directly to State Street:

- Encourage commercial and institutional development and use within defined areas;
- Encourage the use of existing structures for the purposes for which they were built: commercial for commercial and residential for residential;
- Encourage early involvement of Heritage Hill Association in planning for commercial and institutional development;
- Educate developers of commercial and institutional properties about being sensitive to adjacent historic and/or residential structures;
- Encourage appropriate infill development of vacant parcels;
- Coordinate the preservation of existing public improvements and public buildings;



#### **Master Plans**



- Regulate the installation of new or replacement utilities to be buried underground;
- Establish standards for public pavements and street furniture to ensure that they are compatible with the historic nature of the streetscape;
- Maintain small neighborhood parks;
- Encourage the maintenance of the exterior and grounds of commercial and institutional structures in a historically appropriate condition; and
- Increase direct public involvement in safety programs and practices

In order to be successful, it is important that the State Street Plan works in conjunction with other regulating documents to provide a clear and concise overview of the intended direction. By providing specific information pertaining to the future land uses, the design of the structures, the streetscape, and a handful of policy statements pertaining to crime prevention, the City's regulatory boards and commissions will be able to make more informed decisions regarding to the future of the State Street Corridor.





It is not uncommon for people to make a "pros and cons" list when making a decision. A similar process occurs when residents or business owners make a determination regarding locating a business, moving to, building, renovating, or even visiting a particular area. These determining factors are called push and pull factors. A push factor is anything that would push positive business or people out of an area. However, a pull factor is anything that would pull people into an area resulting in an improvement, either economically, structurally, or socially. It is important to note that push/pull factors only need to be generally perceived by interested parties and could be based on either public opinion or some type of factual information.

Following several discussions at visioning sessions, committee workshops, and discussions with the Neighborhood Association, the following Push/ Pull factors are present for State Street.

Push	Pull	
Excessive Panhandling and Crime	Large Residential Density	
Lack of Identifying Element Along Street	Surrounded by a Stable Residential Neighborhood	
Perceived as Unsafe	Abundant Employment Opportunities within Walking Distance	
No Tree Canopy	Increased Development from Nearby Medical Institution	
Visible Damage to Street and Sidewalks	Available Occupancy	
Brick Surfacing Only on Half the Street	Improving Real Estate Market	
Excess Litter & Debris Along Street	Strong Neighborhood Association	
Abundance of Unoccupied Storefronts	Charm of Large Historic Homes in the Nearby Neighborhood	
Lack of Building Maintenance in Under or Unoccupied Buildings	Natural Corridor into Downtown	
Lack of Visible Pedestrian Services on the Street	Natural Corridor into Uptown and Cherry Street	
Perception of an Overly-Regulative Historic Preservation Commission	Long-term Protection from Being in a Historic District	
Overabundance of Nuisance Activity	Supportive and Knowledgeable City Planning Staff	
Inconsistent Street Wall and Overabundance of Parking Lots		
Overpriced Vacant Buildings		

Goals describe the desired end result and are either geared toward eliminating "push" factors or increasing the number of



# Push and Pull Factors

"pull" factors. These goals are also broken into two parts, the overall goal and individual goal statements. The goal statements provide the foundational elements for implementation strategies to obtain the overall goal.

#### The overall goal for State Street is:

"Establish and maintain an attractive, safe destination with a recognizable identity and an eclectic mix of restaurants, retail, services, businesses and housing."

#### **GOAL STATEMENTS:**

- Establish the perception and reality that State Street is a clean and safe street.
- Create a business district with an eclectic mix of retail and restaurants that cater to the residents of Heritage Hill and the surrounding institutions and visitors.
- Establish appropriate housing and commercial development fronting on State Street which can be adaptable to other uses as needed.
- Create a pedestrian and environmentally friendly streetscape that is welcoming and safe to residents and customers.
- Define and establish a distinctive State Street identity that people can rally around.
- Foster a social environment targeted to nearby residents, employers, employees and visitors through the use of events, programs, and development.



## Goal Statements

Implementation strategies are the specific actions that are to be taken in anticipation of achieving the specific goal statements. As this plan is intended to be a document to provide guidance over a 5-to-30 year time period, implementation strategies are broken into immediate action, mid-range action, and long-range action.

#### **Immediate Action Implementation Strategies:**

- Develop a "Safe Street Committee" of owners, residents, police and fire departments with a "fine point" focus on crime "hot spots": The Stuyvesant Apartments, Clarks Grocery Store, the vacant building at 345 State to reduce ongoing street nuisance problems like drugs, disorderly conduct, littering, graffiti, loitering, trespassing, and drinking in public areas.
- Acquire funding to hire a company to clean the loose refuse off of the public right-of-way and water vegetation for two years similar to the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) areas, or encourage the expansion of the DDA to include State Street. In conjunction, install aesthetically-appropriate waste cans that would be anchored to sign posts to prevent littering.
- Plant large-diameter street trees with watering bags within the existing sidewalk openings with the goal of shading 100% of the curb line. Use mulch, flowers, or other ground cover to inhibit the development of weeds and rain barrels to capture storm water run-off, to water desired vegetation.
- Organize and host monthly events during the summer and fall months in Foster Park to enhance community pride and establish a consistent pedestrian presence in the area. The target group would be neighborhood residents, businesses, and nearby institutions. These events would include family friendly movie nights, picnics, back to school events, and possible holiday-specific events for the Fourth of July, Halloween, and Christmas.
- Installation of decorative banners with a consistent State Street theme on light poles to establish a consistent visual element for the entire target area, to both promote State Street and to further establish the boundaries of the target area.
- Explore possible partnerships with the Heritage Hill Association and the Grand Rapids Public Museum to install



# **Implementation Strategies**

displays relating to State Street in the windows of the old Public Museum at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and State Street.

- Explore possible partnerships with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, neighbors, and other interested parties to host events, show informational or graphic displays, to promote and encourage new development or to assist in streetscape maintenance.
- Utilize vacant spaces including empty storefronts, parking lots, and alley spaces between buildings for special events.

#### **Mid-Range Implementation Strategies:**

- Work with the City of Grand Rapids to repair the existing brick street surface of State Street and reinstall brick street surface between Madison and Jefferson Avenues.
- Work with the City of Grand Rapids to install mini "parklets" with seating for pedestrians and business customers.
- Work with the City of Grand Rapids to make repairs to damaged sidewalk sections and street corners to make State Street compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and accessible to everyone.
- Develop regional and national marketing plans to support existing businesses and to attract redevelopment of existing structures containing pedestrian-focused commercial uses including coffee shops, ice cream shops, delis, or similar activities, and residential development where appropriate.
- Work with the Boy Scouts or similar organization to construct an informational history plaque at Foster Park illustrating the history of State Street and Foster Park similar to the information plaque at Lincoln Park.
- Work with the City to construct an informational kiosk to promote upcoming neighborhood events.



#### **Long-Range Implementation Strategies:**

- Redevelop marketing plan to focus on infill development with mixed-use housing or pedestrian-focused business including small restaurants, quality grocery store, specialty retail, or similar uses.
- Establish an ongoing process of organized meetings between potential developers, representatives of the Heritage Hill Association, and representatives of the City's Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation departments to enhance cooperation, eliminate miscommunication and misunderstandings, and to foster a developmentsupportive environment.
- Construct an entry feature on both ends of State Street with key architectural or streetscape elements that can be found elsewhere on the street as a way to further establish boundaries of the area and as a way to foster civic pride.

#### **On-Going Strategies:**

- Work with the City Historic Preservation Commission, the Heritage Hill Association, residents and other groups to preserve contributing resources such as existing structures, statues, street placement, and parks.
- Engage other organizations to create events that highlight and promote State Street.









The streetscape is the most visual component of any area. As such, the State Street streetscape should be both welcoming to businesses and pedestrians, and established in such a way to enhance environmental conditions within the City. To accomplish this, the installation of large-caliper street trees will provide shade to the sidewalk and businesses reducing summer cooling bills, creating wind blocks, and mitigating storm water runoff concerns. Trees also clean the air, reduce noise, and enhance the perception of a safe environment.

Along with an established tree canopy, a consistent brick street surface, benches, parklets, and maintained sidewalks improve the streetscape for everyone. Brick street surfacing from Jefferson Avenue to Madison Avenue is not only visually appealing it reduces the speed of traffic thus providing for a safer pedestrian experience. Benches provide a place for people to sit and enjoy their food, purchases or just rest and maintained sidewalks create a safe environment for wheelchairs and strollers, along with anyone walking from building to building.

The following streetscape design ideas would be supported and encouraged:

- Installation of a parklet near the intersection of State Street and Prospect Avenue and near the intersection at Lafayette Avenue;
- Installation of pedestrian-oriented decorative street lights, similar to those found elsewhere in the neighborhood
- Installation of large-caliber shade trees between the pedestrian-traveled part of sidewalk and the curb, for the entire length of State Street;
- Maintain and reinstall brick street surface on State Street from Madison Avenue to Jefferson Avenue;
- Install benches near bus stop at Lafayette Avenue and State Street;
- Permit outdoor seating, tables, movable planters, and similar temporary improvements in front of business in a manner that will not interfere with pedestrian traffic; and
- Install bike lanes.



# **Streetscape Improvements**





The existing commercial building infrastructure on State Street consists of an eclectic blend of designs representative of various eras of development. The existing restaurant uses are recognized by a classic single-story design with large windows along the sidewalks. A former auto dealership and repair station still has many of the open showroom windows overlooking the street, but the interior is broken into multiple apartments. One structure at the corner of State Street and Lafayette Avenue appears to have one been a gas station, as it is set at an angle to the intersection and while small, provide a distinctive feature to the intersection. The remaining buildings provided limited transparency and are mostly used as offices or are vacant.

The following Commercial and Office Development design and use policies for buildings on State Street would be supported and encouraged:

- Use architectural cues found on other structures on State Street for new infill construction;
- Be between no more than four stories in height;
- Have a flat or low pitched roof with a parapet facing the street frontage;
- Have off street parking, if required, in the back of the proposed structure, on the street, or off site;
- Be constructed within five feet of the front property line and zero feet from either or both side property lines unless otherwise required by the Historic District Standards;
- Limit first-floor uses to retail, restaurant, or similar pedestrian-based use;
- Encourage mixed-use developments with upper floors occupied by office or residential use;
- Have direct sidewalk level, front façade access; and
- Meet all applicable Historic District requirements.





# Commercial, Office, and Mixed Use Development

Currently, only one structure is used for residential purposes, however as trends for housing close to downtown increase, several of the areas at the east end of State Street and along the adjacent streets (currently occupied by parking lots) are suited for townhouses or similarly designed housing. The structures that front onto State Street should be designed so they can later transition into commercial structures or even live/work units with a commercial activity on the ground floor and residential on the upper floors.

An increase in the residential occupancy of non-ground floor levels along State Street will boost need for additional eating and retail amenities, and can also provide housing in close proximity to major employment centers including Mercy Health Saint Mary's Hospital and several medical office buildings within and close to the project boundary areas.

Infill residential development within the project area should meet the following:

- Have brick or similar exterior façade materials found elsewhere on State Street or clapboard siding if on adjacent streets;
- Be constructed to permit first-floor conversion into a commercial site to establish a live/work structure for structures that front onto State Street;
- Be between two and three stories in height;
- Have a gable roof;
- Have off-street parking, if required, in the back of the proposed structure, on the street, or off-site;
- Be constructed within ten feet of the front property line unless otherwise required by Historic District Standards; and
- Meet all applicable Historic District requirements.



# Residential Development

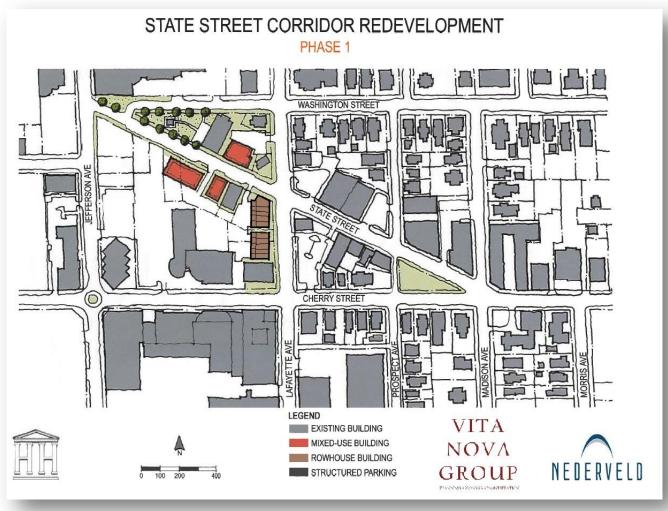




Not all uses are appropriate in all locations. Therefore, the primary focus for commercial and mixed-use development would be along State Street. Areas along Cherry Street, between Madison and Lafayette Avenues are, and should stay, residential. Lafayette Avenue between State Street and Cherry Street would be best focused on higher-density residential. However, there is the reality that any ground level frontage on State Street needs be commercial.

The reality of redevelopment for a corridor such as State Street is that not everything happens all at once. A phased approach would be the most appropriate. Phase 1, illustrated below, would encourage the infill development of existing vacant sites, primarily between Lafayette Avenue and Jefferson Avenue. This approach would add both residential occupancy along Lafayette Avenue and establish a street-wall on State Street.

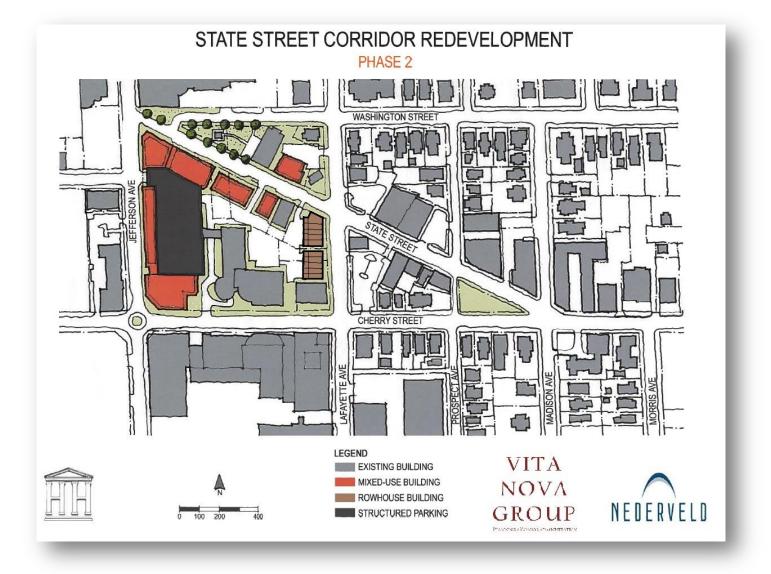
Future Land Use Maps



Phase 2 of the redevelopment plan would include the additional development of Mercy Health's Saint Mary's Hospital. This includes a multiple level structured parking garage and further mixed-use infill development along State Street from Lafayette Avenue to Jefferson Avenue helping to help solidify the anchor points at both ends of State Street, firming up the street walls, and provide a combination of residential, office, and retail opportunities along the corridor.



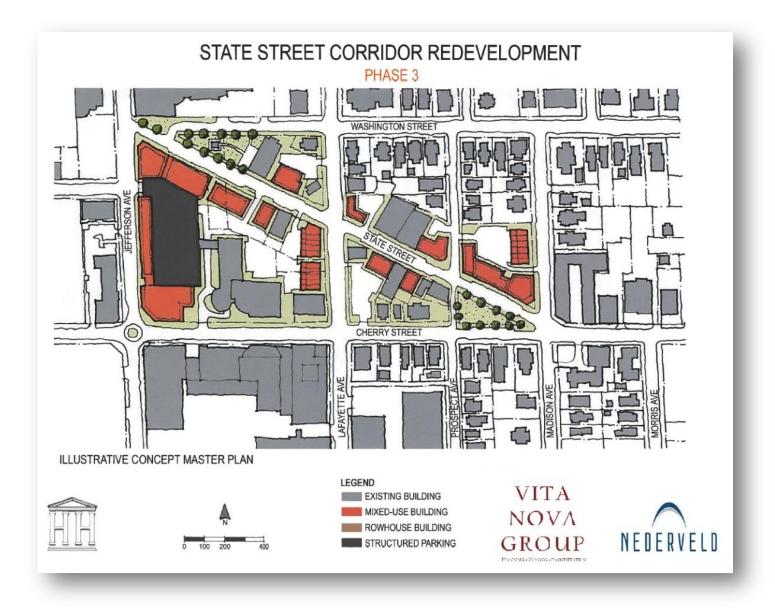
Phase 2 would also allow opportunities for shared parking between Mercy Health Saint Mary's Hospital and the buildings that have frontage on State Street.



Phase 3 of the development would include infill development of the areas between Lafayette Avenue and Madison Avenue, including the street corners and a total redevelopment of the buildings across from Foster Park. Each of the structures that front on State Street should maintain a retail/restaurant or similar pedestrian-oriented use, with offices or residential use on the upper floors.



Townhouse residential development on Madison Avenue would increase the residential occupancy and vibrancy of the corridor. It would additionally provide a transition into the traditional residential structures found on adjacent streets.



Currently, the City of Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance lists uses permitted by right, or as special land uses within the subject area that are in conflict with provisions of this Plan. As such, it is the suggestion of the Heritage Hill Association to have the City of Grand Rapids establish a State Street Overly Zoning District to better control the potential uses along the corridor, and encourage those that would maximize pedestrian activity on the ground floor. The boundaries of this district would be limited to any property that has direct frontage on State Street.

Structures built within this district shall be located no further than five feet from the front property line unless it interferes with traffic - vision obstruction triangles at intersections. Additionally, structures shall be between two and four stories in height, and have zero side yard setback requirements. Structures shall be required to meet all other applicable zoning and development regulations not listed elsewhere within this plan. The standards listed within this plan shall be subject Historic District Commission review and approval on a structure by structure basis.

Furthermore, it is advised that the following uses be permitted by right:

- Restaurant (except Regulated Uses Without Alcohol)
- Outdoor Seating on Ground Level
- Studio for Aerobics, dance, Yoga, Martial Arts, Music Instruction
- Retail Sales
- Antique, Second-Hand Store (except Pawn Shop)
- Art Studio, Gallery
- Outdoor Activities (Displays, Sales of Products, Not Including Vehicles)
- Commercial Production of Alcohol, Baked Goods, or Similar Products - Less Than 15,000 Square Feet.
- Co-located Wireless Communication Facilities.

The following uses should be permitted by right on upper floors only:

- Dwellings
- Home Occupations
- Bank, Credit Union
- Film Production Photography, Radio, TV Studio



## **Zoning Plan**

- General or Professional Uses
- Live/Work Unit
- Medical or Dental Uses
- Copying Mailing Courier Services, Parcel Receiving, Shipping Station
- Research Institution Medical Laboratory Processing

The following uses should be permitted as a Special Land Use:

- Group Living, Including Residential Care, Not To Be Within 500 feet Of Similar Use.
- Child Care Center
- Government and Institutional Uses
- Hospital, Clinic, Medial Center, Rehabilitation Center, Administrative Offices – On Upper Floors Only
- Arcade, Amusement Devices, Gamming, Pool Hall
- Bar, Tavern, Taproom, Tasting Room
- Concession Sales
- Dance Club Night Club, Youth Club Accessory To Another Use, Not To Be Within 500 Feet Of Similar Use
- Entertainment Live (except Regulated Uses)
- Health or Athletic Club, Sports Complex
- Hookah Lounge, Cigar Lounge
- Lodging, Short-Term, Hotel, Motel, Bed and Breakfast On Upper Floors Only
- Outdoor Food Preparation and Cooking
- Animal Daycare (W/O Boarding)
- Veterinary Clinic or Hospital
- Alcohol Sates for Off-Site Consumption (Including Package Good Store – LCC Permit)
- Cash Advance
- Fire Arm Sales
- Parking Garages shall be required to have a permitted use, no less than 20-feet in depth between the front property line and the parking garage.



Over the past 150 years, State Street has undergone substantial changes, from a Native American trail leading away from the river, to a tree lined residential street with grand single-family homes, to a commercial corridor with auto dealerships, gas stations, and offices, to what we see today. Corridors such as this are always changing and evolving, addressing the needs of neighbors and in response to social and economic changes. Care needs to be taken to build off of the good foundations of the past while still addressing the negative impacts that currently prevent new development. With a strong emphasis on environmental conservation found throughout the City, improvements should be made in a manner that will prevent negative ecological impacts. The historic cues of the past should be preserved as an indication of what State Street once was and new development should be shaped, planned, and designed to address current needs, desires, and intentions. Planning will shape State Street into a vibrant and interactive neighborhood corridor for future generations.



#### Conclusion

### **Appendices:**

# **Stakeholder Committee Members and Visioning Session Members:**

Rhonda Baker Char Kruzich

Bill Bruursema Barb Lester

Zora Carrier Tom and Anne Logan

Kay Courtney Kevin McCurren

Tracy Clark Craig Nobbelin

Susan Duesbery Wayne Norlin

Jan Earl Jim Payne

Wendy Falb Mike & Paula Raymond

Ann Finkler Don Smalligan

Stephanie Gerdes Rick Stevens

Nabil Ghazal Jim Talen

Coleen Hamman Todd Theisen

Jennifer Hankinson Patrick Tischler

Vicki Hudson Tom & Chris Truesdale

Mark Hutchison Deb Zondervan

Mary Kenyon



### **Visioning Session Dates:**

June 29, 2011 – Grand Rapids Community College, Devos Campus

September 28, 2011 – The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

May 2, 2012 – The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

### **Public Hearing:**

July 8, 2013 – Lacks Canter Center Grand Conference Room

### Heritage Hill Board Adoption:

August 21, 2013 – Hauenstein Center, Saint Mary's Hospital